

IMITATION Acts 9.32-43

For those of you who are studying through David Platt's book, *Radical*, with us, this week's scripture is from Psalm 67.

(Read the chapter.)

In preparing the *Radical* study guide for this week, there was so much to discuss from this chapter in Psalms that I was tempted to stray away from our study of Acts and preach on this chapter. Yet I discovered once again the wonderful way that God has worked not only in giving us His word, but also in the uniformity of the message that it brings.

In **Genesis 12.1-3**, God told Abraham, "*I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you...and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*"

In the words of David Platt, God has blessed us with extravagant grace so that we might share the gospel with the world so that all men will see His extravagant glory.

John Calvin: All the blessings we enjoy are Divine deposits, committed to our trust on this condition, that they should be dispensed for the benefit of our neighbors.

Once you understand this principle, you cannot help but see it exemplified throughout Scripture. That is certainly true of our text for today in Acts.

When we ended with **verse 31** last week, we learned that, following the conversion of Paul, the churches experienced peace throughout the entire region and that they were greatly multiplied.

Today we will see the power of Christ released through the ministry of Peter in the lives of the churches in the Plains of Sharon.

When last we saw Peter, he was in Samaria where he confirmed that salvation had come to the Samaritans and had strongly

rebuked the magician, Simon, who had sought to purchase the gifts of the Holy Spirit for his own gain.

Following this experience, he apparently joined other disciples in preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans. His travels seemed to have taken him all over Samaria and Judea. In **verse 32** of **chapter 9**, we find him in the city of Lydda.

Lydda is located in the plains of Sharon, one of the most beautiful and productive areas of Judea. It extended from below Mt. Carmel in the north to below the city of Joppa.

Lydda itself is about 25-30 miles northeast of Jerusalem and only about 10-12 miles from the coastal city of Joppa. Lydda was the home of at least one famous Israelite – the first king of Israel – King Saul.

In the text today, Peter comes to town and meets a man named Aeneas who has suffered from a sickness which caused paralysis and which had kept him bedridden for eight years. After healing Aeneas, Peter is then called to Joppa by some of the church members there where he restores the life of one of the members named Dorcas who had only recently died.

In both of these episodes, we can see the principle of extravagant grace and extravagant glory demonstrated.

- I. **Imitation of Christ**
- II. **Illustration of Grace**
- III. **Implication for Missions**

I. **Imitation of Christ**

Peter had been with Jesus from the beginning of His earthly ministry, so he had seen many miracles performed by Jesus. Peter, himself, had also performed many miracles, but each time, he made it clear to everyone involved that he was not the one performing the miracles. The person who was actually doing the healing was Jesus Christ.

Peter recognized that we are saved unto good works, but that the works are not ours. We can no more live the Christ life than we

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

can live each other's lives. Only Christ can live the Christ life and He does it through people who are completely yielded to Him.

All that Peter was doing was allowing Christ to work in and through him to heal the lame and to raise the dead back to life.

The healing of Aeneas was very similar to the time when Jesus healed a man who was a paralytic whose friends had lowered him down through a roof because of the crowds around Jesus. You can read about this healing in **Luke 5.17-26**.

Jesus said to the paralytic, "**Arise, and take up your bed, and go to your own home.**"

The Bible says, "**Immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he had been lying on and went home glorifying God.**"

Now in Lydda, Peter said to Aeneas (v. 34), "**Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and make your bed.**"

The Bible says that he immediately got up.

Then notice what happened next (v. 35): **And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.**

The extravagant grace of God worked through the voice of Peter in the life of Aeneas in such a way that the multitudes expressed extravagant glory to God.

But the story doesn't stop there.

Maybe that very same day, two men came from Joppa to urge Peter to come to Joppa, about 11-12 miles away.

Joppa was a seaport town. Today it is known as Jaffa, a part of the much larger city of Tel Aviv.

In Joppa, a believer named Tabitha (Hebrew) or Dorcas (Greek) had died, apparently without warning. You can tell a lot about Dorcas by the way the entire city responded to her death.

Dorcas is only the second woman mentioned by name after Pentecost. The first was Sapphira, who had lied about her gift to

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

God and was struck dead on the spot. She was immediately buried.

Dorcas was a woman who abounded "**with deeds of kindness and charity which she continually did.**" (v. 36) She was given to helping her neighbors and especially helping to take care of those in the area who could not help themselves.

Peter agreed to go to Joppa, and, upon entering the upper room where the body of Tabitha lay, he probably remembered another case very similar to this one.

In **Luke 8.40-56**, you can read about a time when Jesus was called to the home of a man named Jairus, ruler of the local synagogue. His only daughter, about 12 years old, had died.

Jesus went to the home of Jairus and, when He entered the upper room where the daughter lay, Jesus ran all of the mourners out of the room. He went in with only Peter, James, and John, and the parents of the young girl.

Then Jesus took her by the hand and said, "**Talitha, cumi. Little girl, I say to you, arise.**"

The Bible then says, "**...immediately the young girl rose up and began to walk.**" You can imagine the amazement of those who were in the room. The Bible says they were ecstatic.

Now in Joppa, Peter finds himself in a very similar situation once again. But Peter does something first that Jesus did not have to do – he knelt down and prayed.

Peter knew that the healing did not come from him and that the healing would not even come through him unless it was the will of Christ.

So he prayed. The Bible doesn't say how long he prayed, but it was long enough for Peter to hear from God that it was His will for the girl to be restored to life. With the assurance of the will of God, Peter spoke to the woman who lay before him.

Even the words he used probably brought back memories of the witness that he had had of the restoration of life to the daughter of Jairus.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Jesus had taken the young girl by the hand and said, “**Talitha, cumi. Young girl, arise.**”

Now Peter said to Dorcas, “**Tabitha, cumi. Tabitha, arise.**”

The woman opened her eyes, looked at Peter, and sat up. As Jesus had done with the daughter of Jairus, Peter took Dorcas by the hand, helped her up from the bed, and presented her to those who had loved her and mourned for her so.

Then notice what happened next.

Act 9:42 It became known all over Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.

The extravagant grace of God worked through the voice of Peter in the life of Dorcas in such a way that the multitudes expressed extravagant glory to God. Many came to acknowledge – not that Peter was a great preacher and healer – but that Jesus was Lord.

Not only do we see the **Imitation of Christ** in this story, but we also see...

II. Illustration of Grace

Look again with me to **Psalm 67:1-3**.

Here is the grace of God in action.

God be merciful or graceful This is the extravagant grace of God.

Bless us. Cause your face to shine upon us. This is the sanctifying work of God, making us into His image.

That your way may be known upon the earth, your salvation among the nations, and all people praise you. Here is the extravagant glory of God that results when people come to a saving knowledge of Christ.

We see this same pattern in Acts in the healings of Aeneas and Dorcas.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you. This is the extravagant grace of God.

Get up. Immediately, he got up. He responded immediately to the grace of God.

Make up your bed. Aeneas went straight to work taking care of the duties assigned him.

All of the people turned to the Lord The extravagant glory of God is demonstrated in the lives of those who witnessed the grace of God in action.

The story is the same with the events surrounding the restoration of life to Dorcas.

God, through His extravagant grace and mercy, brought a dead person to life and immediately His extravagant glory was demonstrated in the lives of many people in the city of Joppa.

God doesn't call on us to work miracles. He only wants us to be obedient to His call on our lives. He will work the acts of grace through us when we are totally yielded to Him and to His sovereign will.

We have seen the results when there is the **Imitation of Christ** by those who serve Him.

We have seen the **Illustration of Grace** as God's extravagant grace resulted in Him receiving extravagant glory.

Finally, I want us to look at...

III. Implications for Missions

We won't have time for this today, because the story is too involved and too long to share in the limits of our worship time this morning.

It is the story of God's call to Peter to go to the house of a non-Jewish person named Cornelius and offer him the grace that God has so generously demonstrated to Israel.

Most of us are familiar with the story, and we will spend some time with this subject beginning next Sunday if God be willing.

For today, though, suffice it to point out that...

- Peter did not end up in the city of Joppa by accident.
- He did not stay at the house of Simon the Tanner by coincidence.
- He did not happen to have a vision from God at exactly the same time that Cornelius did.

All of these things are examples of God working out His perfect plan through those who are His disciples.

This morning, God is still calling people to respond to His extravagant grace and to give Him extravagant glory by our obedience to His call on our lives.

An invitation is not a time for a preacher to talk you into making a profession of faith. It is a time for men to respond to the call of the Holy Spirit and to make known before the church what God has done in their lives individually.